



Backgrounder: Banning Gatherings and Closing Certain Businesses in the Northwest Territories

Gatherings are a significant source of spread of any virus. COVID-19 is no exception.

The Northwest Territories Chief Public Health Officer has banned all indoor gatherings in the Northwest Territories effective tomorrow to protect families, friends, and communities.

For our purposes, a gathering is when any amount of people get together in the same indoor space who don't live in the same household.

Getting together outdoors is allowed for up to 10 people if social (physical) distance of at least two metres is maintained ***the entire time***.

She has also formalized the closure of certain types of businesses because they are unable or unlikely to maintain proper social (physical) distancing to keep residents safe.

So what does that mean for the territory?

For everyone

- No visitors inside any home
- If you're caring for someone, you must limit your time inside their living space as much as you can
- If you were planning a party, cancel it
- If a loved one has passed away, you cannot have a funeral. You can hold a burial with immediate family, but not a funeral
- You will need to keep in touch with your friends by videochat, phone, social media, or group chat for a while
- No outdoor get-togethers where people stand close together with people who you do not live with. If you have 10 people or less there, you must all keep two metres apart at all times, otherwise it is illegal.
- If you're on-the-land, your tent is the same as being inside a house – no visitors. And you must only go out on the land with your household.
- When you're out in public, you must keep two metres away from people at all times
- You can still go for a walk with your friend – but you need to keep at least two metres apart the entire time.



For organizations – municipal governments, NGOs, professional associations etc.

- If your event is coming up soon, you must cancel it. It's unfortunate, but we need to keep each other safe right now.

For businesses

The order essentially breaks businesses into red (absolutely not allowed to remain open); yellow (if you can maintain good social distance and don't present a high-risk, you can remain open); and green (businesses that we believe must stay open to protect public health).

Here are some examples in each category.

Red

- Tour operators
- Bottle depots
- Gyms and fitness centres
- Museums and art galleries
- Bars and night clubs
- Theatres and movie theatres
- Dine-in portions of restaurants
- Personal service establishments where physical distancing is not possible, including but not limited to: barber shops, hair salons, tattoo and/or piercing services, spas, nail salons, massage therapists, aestheticians, naturopathic practitioners, acupuncturists, and chiropractic services.

Green

- Grocery stores
- Gas bars and stations
- Banks
- Pharmacies
- Liquor stores

Yellow

Examples would include:

- Takeout, drive-thru or delivery restaurants



- Corner stores
- Large retail stores (i.e. Canadian Tire)

How will businesses keep customers safe?

These establishments must follow strict social (physical) distancing protocols and do everything in their power to keep their businesses safe and clean. We have produced an advisory to businesses covering these expectations.

What can businesses do if they have questions about continuing operations, or making their business safe?

Contact covid@gov.nt.ca to speak with an Environmental Health Officer. They will give you the right advice.

What do we do if we see a person or business not following the rules?

Contact Protect NWT – the contact centre for our Compliance and Enforcement Taskforce – to report your credible, specific complaint. It will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken.

protectnwt@gov.nt.ca

1-833- 378-8297

How long is this going to happen?

That depends on how well we do as a territory and country in responding to COVID-19. Right now, there is no end date because there is no indication the COVID-19 crisis has reached its peak in the rest of Canada.

But that is being re-evaluated every two weeks because Minister of Health and Social Services Diane Thom needs to re-declare the Public Health Emergency every two weeks by law.